

# Community Preservation Act Committee Proposal Request Form for FY 2014

**Date:** December 4, 2012

**Submitting Entity:** Amherst Media

Contact Person: Jim Lescault, Executive Director

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## CPA funding category

Check all that apply

- ☐ Community Housing
- ☐ Open Space
- ☒ Historic Preservation
- ☐ Recreation

## Overview of Proposal:

Amherst Media has provided the community of Amherst with 36 years of service. Operating three cable channels for Public, Education and Government programming, Amherst Media carries forth the mission of advocating for and implementing the manifestations of Free Speech. By offering affordable training in the various aspects of media production with current equipment and maintaining multiple platforms for distribution, Amherst Media provides opportunities for all viewpoints to be created and heard. From hyper-local coverage of politics, culture and civic life to issues of international significance, Amherst Media always strives to engage the widest community possible. Whether via cable television or on Amherst Media's interactive web site, a myriad of viewpoints and perspectives are presented, encouraging and modeling participatory media.

It is the firm belief of the organization that we possess critical history of the Town of Amherst. We are committed to finding the best possible solution to provide easy and free access to this history not only for the local community but also for interested parties throughout the world via the web. As important or even more important is the desire to ensure this material is preserved in the best format with the greatest life expectancy as humanly possible. Once we identify the methodology and policies of the collection we will develop internal protocols to ensure continuity.

Amherst Media, like many of the older media/access centers are confronted with how to best archive the town's historical recordings, due to the multiple changes in the original videotape formats and currently used data memory cards. While recent conversion to digitization has helped with the current recordings, methodology of conversion and storage format is still in need of determination, for both current and older non-digital recordings.

After conducting a rough inventory of tape contents in our videotape storage room and finding an estimated 2,577 hours of material we decided to turn to the experts in archiving- the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB). We applied for and were selected to be part of their "Roving Archivist" Services. The

archivist assigned to work with us was Rachel Onuf, an archival consultant and adjunct professor at the Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Mt. Holyoke College. Ms. Onuf's has over twenty years in the archival profession and is a well-respected educator with real world experience working with small institutions. Her assignment was to perform a strategic assessment of Amherst Media, drafting a report with some recommendations for how we might proceed, citing resources for additional information.

(See Attached Report)

**Reformatting is the most cost-beneficial and technically acceptable approach to preservation for machine-dependent deteriorating records such as sound and video recordings and motion pictures. Reformatting ensures that the information on deteriorating records or records requiring obsolete equipment is preserved as a new, state of the art record, easily accessible to all.**

**Without reformatting by local community cable access stations we will lose the sights and sounds of our local history, we will no longer be able to hear significant speeches and firsthand accounts of what our communities were like way back when. We will no longer be able to watch important community events that brought folks together around a common purpose - [Diane LeBlanc, Regional Administrator, National Archives & Records Administration, Northeast Region](#)**

Following the recommendations and suggestions outlined in Rachel Onuf's attached report to SHRAB, we have constructed the budget to reflect the hardware and personnel for an in-house project.

**Hardware: \* due to only recently seeing Archivist Report documentation of hardware costs will be following, though estimates are relatively accurate.**

Two iMacs - \$1450 each

Two Intensity Shuttles for Thunderbolt - \$239 each

Two Quantum LTO tape drives - \$1500 each

LTO Tapes - \$4000

Misc Connecting cables - \$300

**TOTAL - \$10,678**

**Personnel:**

With the use of two iMacs for digitalization the total 2,577 hours of tape material has been divided by two, equaling 1,288.5 hrs. This number has been multiplied by .5 to adjust for the set uptime, rewind, relocate etc. bringing the number of hours up to 1,933.75 hrs. An hourly rate of \$20 was assigned based upon graduate level fee structure, including a 12% to cover payroll contributions. **This total is: \$43,316**

**Total Budget:   \$53,994**

**Other Sources of Funding:**

Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) will be contacted to assist in preparing grant applications for Documentary Heritage Grant Program as well National Endowment for the Humanities Reservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions, such as Humanities Collections and reference Resources.

**Timeline on CPA Funds:**

June 2012

Order equipment; set-up workspace

Advertise Position, Interview and hire

Mid-July @15th Hired Archivist begins

\* estimated time frame is 48 weeks at 40 hours/wk

Completed June 27, 2014

**Urgency:**

Many of the tapes in question are in danger of being lost due to drastic changes in temperature and humidity conditions within the facility.

# AMHERST MEDIA

Prepared by:  
Rachel Onuf

MA SHRAB Roving Archivist

28 November 2012

On October 9, 2012, I met with Jim Lescault, Kayla Creamer, and Craig Sinclair, staff members at Amherst Media, to discuss how they can preserve their analog and digital media archive. As a “roving archivist” contracted by the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) to do a strategic assessment of the institution, I was charged with drafting this report, with some recommendations for how they might proceed and resources for additional information.

In the world of archives, audiovisual materials are widely acknowledged to be most at risk. For years, films and tapes, with their odd formats and reliance on playback equipment, were neglected in favor of paper-based materials. Archivists knew what to do with paper. Now digitized and born digital materials demand attention, and the documentary evidence present on magnetic tape, in particular, is in danger of being passed over yet again, as archivists are forced to grapple with digital preservation and access issues. Many institutions recognize the value of moving images and recorded sound, but lack the expertise and the resources necessary to preserve these fragile materials for the long term.

Amherst Media is different. Unlike many archives that just have a smattering of audiovisual material, they have a large collection with a defined focus: the collection documents 36 years of the Town of Amherst and its citizenry. Through the recordings they make and that they assist the community in making, and their ability to disseminate them via three cable channels and their web site, they have been documenting and providing access to Amherst’s past and its present. They also have the expertise that most repositories lack. Staff members at Amherst Media are comfortable managing magnetic tape and digital media – a realm that gets highly technical almost immediately. For the past two years they have recorded in digital formats, and understand the need to reformat the analog tapes before they become unreadable.

The first step in a reformatting project is to do a thorough survey of the holdings. Amherst Media has already done a rough inventory of the contents of the storage room, noting the approximate length, format, and number of tapes in each section of the room. The totals: 2,306 VHS,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and Mini DV tapes with an estimated 2,577 hours of material. The next step might be to take note of the content and condition, and to flag items that might contain copyrighted material. Such a survey can help prioritize the reformatting, which can be time-consuming and costly, so that the tapes that are most vulnerable, have the most research value, and are unambiguously in the public domain can be addressed first. There are several free tools available to help with inventory and assessment (see Appendix).

The inventory project also needs to be extended to those materials that are currently stored at the Jones Library (both original tapes and material that is now stored on DVDs, for which the analog originals may or may not still exist) and in the garage. It will need to be determined which DVDs are the only copy and they will need to be checked for corruption. Any tapes stored in the garage that are original recordings ought to be brought into a better storage environment. If they have not been migrated to a digital form, they should be added to the queue awaiting reformatting. Ideally, information about all of the tapes would be in one place: currently there is a list of titles produced up to 1996, a list of what is at the Jones, and means of locating more current productions online.

The next step is to decide whether or not to reformat in-house or to send to a vendor, and in either case, to develop and document procedures. I suspect Amherst Media is interested in doing this work

## Appendix

### General resources:

The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) [Videotape Preservation Fact Sheets](http://www.amianet.org/resources/guides/fact_sheets.pdf)  
([http://www.amianet.org/resources/guides/fact\\_sheets.pdf](http://www.amianet.org/resources/guides/fact_sheets.pdf))

AMIA is a non-profit professional association established to advance the field of moving image archiving by fostering cooperation among individuals and organizations concerned with the acquisition, description, preservation, exhibition and use of moving image materials.

The [Videotape Preservation Website](http://videopreservation.conservation-us.org/)  
(<http://videopreservation.conservation-us.org/>)

The purpose of this site is to encourage the preservation of historic video using the mature technology of **digital capture** [video capture cards] to create individual video files, which would be stored on mass storage media such as hard drives (HDD) or data tape (DT). The individual video files created can be copied without loss -- forever. The digital files would be migrated to new storage with no loss due to recapture, error or budget restrictions.

Audio-Visual Working Group of the [Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative](http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/audio-visual/) (FADGI)  
(<http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/audio-visual/>)

The goal for this working group is to identify, establish, and disseminate information about standards and practices for the digital reformatting of historical and cultural audio-visual materials by federal agencies. The effort will cover sound recordings, video recordings, motion picture film, and born-digital content. Topic areas include formatting, metadata, and methodology.

[MXF Application Specification](http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/MXF_app_spec.html)  
([http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/MXF\\_app\\_spec.html](http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/MXF_app_spec.html))

This specification is intended to serve reformatting programs that produce digital-file copies of videotapes, motion picture films, or other audio-visual items for long-term management. The specification is also intended to define a container for born-digital content when the native encoded essence (the underlying bitstream, as acquired by an archive) is judged to be suitable for retention for at least the medium term. The specification will be extensible over time. The initial emphasis is on the reformatting of videotapes (analog and digital) and the formatting of content that arrives at an MXF-file production system as an uncompressed digital video stream. The video to be reformatted may be in standard or high definition (multiple aspect ratios) and, for many archives, the preferred picture encodings will be uncompressed or lossless-compressed JPEG 2000.

## Inventory and Assessment tools for Audiovisual Materials:

### [Basic Inspection Techniques to Sample the Condition of Magnetic Tape](http://www.specsbros.com/whitepaper.html)

(<http://www.specsbros.com/whitepaper.html>)

Basic warning signs of tape instability can often be identified using these guidelines.

### [Texas Commission on the Arts Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide](http://www.arts.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/video.pdf) (2004)

(<http://www.arts.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/video.pdf>)

This guide was created to answer questions commonly asked by custodians of video materials, including how to identify formats, evaluate risks, assess the collection, and what conservation actions might be undertaken.

### [Columbia University. Survey Instrument for Audio and Moving Image Collections](http://library.columbia.edu/services/preservation.html)

(<http://library.columbia.edu/services/preservation.html>)

In 2005, with Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funding, the Columbia University Libraries developed and tested a survey instrument to inventory and assess the physical condition and intellectual control of audio and moving image materials. The survey instrument and instruction manual are available for download, under "Survey Tools."

### [UIUC Audiovisual Self Assessment Program](http://www.library.illinois.edu/avsap/)

(<http://www.library.illinois.edu/avsap/>)

AvSAP exists to assist cultural heritage institutions that have audiovisual materials in their collections and staff who have little to no training in audiovisual preservation, but it is also an excellent tool for those with experience with AV materials. The goal is to help collections managers develop a prioritized preservation plan that will help them extend the lives of their collections.

### [ViPURS: Visual & Playback Inspection Ratings System](http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/movingimage/vipirshome.html)

(<http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/movingimage/vipirshome.html>)

In 2006, the Barbara Goldsmith Preservation and Conservation Department embarked upon a three-year project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to 1) develop a rationale for and strategic approach to operational library preservation services for moving image and audio materials and 2) devise methodologies for assessing the condition of archival magnetic media based on visual and playback inspection in order to prioritize the relative need and appropriate pathways toward preservation.